

This is a very essential fact to bear in mind in the consideration of the Tibetan question—that after both Tibetan and Chinese susceptibilities had been given way to on every occasion, it was the Tibetans who invaded us. It was a Bhutanese invasion of the plains of Bengal, followed by a letter from the Tashi Lama, that had initiated our relations with Tibet in the time of Warren Hastings. And it was this invasion of Sikkim that forced upon us the regularization of our relations with the Tibetans.

When the Tibetans thus invaded the territory of our feudatory, we should have been well within our right in forthwith expelling them by force; but, in accordance with the policy of forbearance we had so consistently pursued, we referred the matter to the Chinese, and requested them to procure the withdrawal of the Tibetans. We also allowed the Chinese ample time, a year, within which to bring their influence to bear. Then, at the end of 1887, we wrote to the Tibetan commander that unless he evacuated his position before March 15, 1888, he would be expelled by force. This letter was returned unopened. In February we wrote to the Dalai Lama himself to the same effect, but again we received no reply. It was only on March 20, 1888, that a British force assumed the offensive, and advanced upon the Tibetans in the position they had occupied within our frontier at Lengtu.

The Tibetans, for the time being, offered no resistance, and retired to Chumbi, on their own side of the frontier, and our troops occupied a position at Gnatong, on our side. Two months later, however, the Tibetans again showed truculence, and with 3,000 men attacked our camp at Gnatong. They were repulsed, and once more withdrew. But in September they, for the third time, advanced across our border, and in a single night, with that skill in building for which they are so remarkable, threw up a wall three miles long and from 3 to 4 feet high in a position just above Gnatong, and some miles within our border.